



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE KATHY KENNEDY
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200
300 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423
Kathy.Kennedy@housegop.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 2, 2021
Testimony by Representative Kathy Kennedy
Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on
In support of HB 6374

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Haskell and Representative Elliott, Vice-Chairs Senator Flexer and Representative Turco, Ranking Members Senator Witkos and Representative Haines and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding HB 6374.

Imagine, an 18-year old college freshman, she is away from home for the first time, enjoying that first taste of independence. Meeting new friends, partying, drinking, all in good fun until she finds herself in a situation, she never expected to be in. She has been partying and is slightly inebriated and alone with a new male friend she just met. They go for a walk, end up back at his room as they continue partying and drinking. Once in his room he forces himself on her. She tells him she does not want to be intimate with him, asking him to stop. She does not know what to do. She gets away from him, only temporarily, as she runs into the bathroom. She is scared, alone and does not know what to do. She wonders if she can stay in the bathroom all night, but he is banging on the door telling her to come out. Her mind is rambling, and she is questioning the situation in her head. She wishes she had not been drinking. Did she party too much? This was not what she expected or wanted. He forces himself on her. With tears running down her face, she closes her eyes until it is over. Finally, he has fallen asleep, so she slips out of the dorm room. Her head is spinning, she is lost and alone, terrified of the experience she just went through. She does not know who or where to turn to. Was she assaulted; was it rape? She blames herself because she was drinking and is underage. She is afraid to call her parents. Was it her fault? So, she decides she must try to forget what happened and move on. How? Who would she talk to anyway? She decides not to return to school the next semester.

How would you feel if this were your daughter, granddaughter, niece? It could also happen to your son, grandson, nephew. This happens on college campuses more often than most realize.

HB 6374 does two things: It mandates each college conduct a survey about this issue every two years to help implement effective policies around this issue; and secondly, it establishes an amnesty program for victims that allow an underage student who has been drinking or using drugs to report an assault without fear of being charged with a violation.

Facts: Campus assault is a major problem. 50% of campus assaults occur in the first three months of school beginning. This is called the "Red Zone." In 2018 there were 436 reported assaults and stalking cases reported at Connecticut colleges. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) estimates that only 5% of victims of sexual violence on any college campus in America choose to report their assault to university officials.

The story I wrote about above is true. This bill helps campuses respond to a real problem that has impacted college students, both female and male. I urge this committee to favorably vote HB 6374 out of committee.

Respectfully,

Kathy Kennedy
State Representative for the 119th